Stranger Drabbles by brodie-wan

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Summary: Welcome to Stranger Drabbles. I'll be exploring Stranger Things in short form here; mostly drabbles and ficlets. Prompts are welcome though I can not guarantee all will be addressed. You can start on Chapter 1 or any of the others. That is the beauty of a one shot/drabble thread. *Edit* Chapter 26 is a fluffy subset called Loving Spoonfuls - 5-5 prompt sets. I hope you enjoy!

1. Chapter 1

Title: Stranger Drabbles

A/N: This is my first Stranger Things fan fiction and that the first I've posted here at in a couple of years. I usually work in the drabble or ficlet format. That is what you will see here. I may choose my owner theme words or work from a list on another site. I jump around in time as well. I hope you'll enjoy my meager offerings.

Spoilers ahead for Stranger Things 2...

Silent

It wasn't long after the Snow Ball Dance, that Hopper relented (Joyce could be persistent) and let El have time to hang out with her friends. It was at the Wheeler house and it was supervised. If Hopper was going to let El spend time with Mike, her sure as hell wouldn't let her do it alone. Joyce was there of course, but she thought the spark of romantic interest was adorable and would, likely encourage it without even knowing. No, The Sheriff had his eyes on Mike Wheeler. The kid was okay, but he was a boy, and boys tended to lose control of their hormones in the presence of girls. That's why Hopper and a gun. And he made sure Mike knew it.

It turned out that there was nothing to worry about. They were Eight graders after all. El didn't talk much which meant she felt safe and comfortable. If she had been a nervous chatterbox, he would have known something was wrong and the evening would have ended far sooner. She huddled close to him at the table as they ate dinner. She didn't participate in the game they played (Clue), but watched intently as Professor Plum was reveled to have killed Miss Scarlet in the Conservatory with a rope. She sat at Mike's side, on the couch, clutching his arm, while they watched a movie (The Love Bug). It was all very innocent. I was all very needy. It was all very *needed*.

Hopper watched from the kitchen, Joyce at his hip. She hugged his arm, and rested her head against it. There was comfort and safety there, too. He caught El's eye and gave her wink. She returned the wink with a smile so lovely and innocent; so thankful and peaceful,

that he had to look away. The mist of emotion clouded his vision. After wiping his eyes, he returned her gaze only the find her eyes back on the movie. He moved the arm that Joyce had been resting on and pulled her into a light hug. Comfort and safety.

Night

It was after eleven when Hopper carried the sleeping El to his truck and strapped her in. She mumbled something that sounds like 'good-bye Mike' but he could be sure. He waved to Joyce, who stood on the porch hugging herself against the chill, and climbed into the driver's seat. He looked over at his passenger and surprised to find his daughter awake and pinning him with a furrowed brow and intense eyes. Hopper resisted the urge to show irritation or role his eyes at her. Instead, he nodded his head gently and smiled in surrender.

"Good-bye to Mike?" he asked, tired, but willing to give her what she wanted.

"Yes," El replied, a hint of disbelief in the one word.

Hopper's weary smile reached his eyes. "Go on then. But, be quick, like bunny."

El opened the door and darted from the truck. She as at the door, and inside, before he could blink. Joyce sauntered over to his wind with a cheesy momma bear grin on her face.

"Jim Hopper, you old softy," she mused.

"Yeah, but it's a state secret so don't tell anyone," he droned. Reaching for his pack of cigarettes in the cup holder, he added. "She wanted to say bye to the boy."

"I figured," Joyce replied.

The Sheriff retrieved his lighter from the console and shook a cigarette from the pack. Taking the but in his mouth, he went to light it.

"I'll be damned," he muttered, bouncing the cigarette between his lips. He was El emerge from the house and make her way back to the

Bronco. "She was quick." Removing butt from this mouth, he shoved it back in the pack. The lighter returned the console.

The young teen hopped in and buckled up, beaming. She sat straight up and looked out the windshield, perhaps trying to get a glimpse of Mike. Hopper turned to Joyce who kissed him on the cheek and with a 'get her home to bed' wave of her arm, returned to the house.

"All set," he said, starting the ignition.

"All set," she replied, with a tight nod of her head. Her cute curls bounced in the moonlight and Hopper could not imagine a more perfect moment.

Cold

When the Sheriff said he had been keeping El's presence a secret, something inside Mike snapped. In retrospect, the something was selfish, needy, loving, protective, pitiful, and down right desperate. But, in the moment, it was self righteous rage. How dare Hopper keep El from him? How dare he allow the gaping wound that was El's 'death' to fester? How dare he?

Mike's rage *about* El being missing was so strong, that he momentarily forgot that she was standing in front of him, reaching out. His emotions were at once so relieved that she was alive, but ever more strained because she was so close all along. He flew at Hopper, beating his chest, calling him a liar and worse. Suddenly, the Sheriff had Mike by the elbow and forcefully ushered him into the nearest room for privacy. The young teen ignored most of Hopper's admonitions, but at the sound of El's name, tuned in.

"...needs you to get hold of yourself. I didn't ask you to approve of my choices. This is bigger than just you. But she needs you to get over yourself and get back out there!"

Still seething, but seeing the truth of Hopper's words, Mike took a deep breath. He wiped his eyes of angry tears and proceeded to calm down. His anger at the Sheriff had not abated, but he now saw that El was more important that his tantrum. Redirected, but still defiant, he said: "This is not over."

Hopper huffed in disbelief and pointed at the door. "Yes, it is."

2. Chapter 2

Hopper

One morning, not long after the Snow Ball dance, Hopper decided to broach the subject of adoption. He had cooked a special breakfast of eggs, sausage, toast, and, of course, Eggos. He had practiced a small speech explaining adoption, explaining that he loved her and wanted to be her family forever. It sounded terrible and he wondered if she would understand; if she would want to be his family.

Sara was never far from his mind during this time. He had lost her to 'The Black Hole'. He had also lost his wife and he had nearly fallen into the Black Hole himself. That would never happen again. Jane was a new start for him. He was a new start for her. There was so much to consider. But, before he considered all the eventualities, he had to know if she would chose him as he had chosen her.

Steve

Steve Harrington knew he had been a jerk. He had been shallow enough to take Nancy's grieving, drunken words to heart. He had decided that she was calling their love a sham and rejecting him. It had been a horrible mistake; made worse by him throwing it in her face once she had sobered up. Dumb. Dumb. Dumb! He had to make it up to her. He had to let her know he was wrong. It felt both natural and unnatural to need her approval; as if she were in control and not he. He wasn't used to being in love. Really in love. Having a girlfriend never necessarily meant love. It was convenience. It was status. Love broke all that. He would buy her flowers and throw himself on her mercy.

El

The breakfast Hopper had provided that morning was one that El associate with a 'talk'. The talk could be good or bad or halfway happy. Her protector appeared nervous, but not mad or upset. This gave her the impression that his news would be good or some kind of compromise. He fidgeted, which was not normal. He was a big man, and strong. She decided to speak first.

"You're being weird," El said, as she shoved a piece of sausage into her mouth. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong, Kid...I mean El," Hopper stammered. "It's hard to believe I've been calling you 'kid' for so long. It should be El."

"Yes," she replied. "Eleven."

"So, Eleven," He continued."I have a lot to tell you, but I'm going to make it simple. I'm going to ask you something, a really important question. I want you to think before you answer. I want you to be sure of the answer you give."

"Okay," the girl replied, still confused and thus concerned. She gave him a fractured smile. "Ask me."

He sat up straighter and took a long drink of his coffee. "El, I want you to be my kid. I want you to be my kid...forever. Do you want to be my kid forever?"

El's concern evaporated and a wave of emotion made her eyes glisten with unshed tears. "You want to be my Poppa?"

The Sheriff's face hardened, momentarily, and returned to relative anxiety. He reached across the table and took her hand gently into his. "No. Not Poppa. Never Poppa." He smiled broadly. "I would be Dad. Would you have me as your dad?"

El didn't hesitate. The past year had been hard, but she never questioned his desire to protect her, to keep her safe from the bad men. Now, he could me more than just her protector. He could love her. She wasn't sure she understood love fully, but she knew it was good.

"Yes," she replied, choked with emotion. "I want you to be Dad." She got up from her chair and rounded the minuscule table and threw her arms around his bull neck.

He hugged her tightly and whispered into her ear. "Good."

3. Chapter 3

A/N: This set is taken from a drabble challenge on another site. I have also decided to stick to the 100 word limit. Let's see how long that lasts. I may just keep using those theme words with a few Christmas ones thrown into the mix.

Beginnings

The first night in the cabin was good. Keeping the kid warm and comfortable was Hopper's primary goal. To that end, he wiped down the small table for two as well as the toaster and plugged it in. He took logs from a pile mere steps from the front door and started a fire in the wood stove. He also gave gave all the bedding a decent beating and shook it out for good measure. After making the beds, he produced a box of Eggos, waved it at El, who was sitting in the couch, and called her to dinner.

Middles

The work began in earnest the following morning when The Sheriff called in sick. He had no idea how he would remove all the dust, but he was thankful for his foresight in covering all the furniture with blankets. He and El removed them, which produced coughing fits for both of them which morphed into laughter and a sitting spell against the back of the couch. Perhaps, the cleaning could wait a while longer. They sat in relative silence, the few words spoken easy and unforced.

"Yucky," she said, sticking out her tongue.

"You got that right, Kid."

Ends

Three days later, the filthy cabin looked more like a home, if small and rickety. The golden brown of the wood was more pronounced and a couple of floor and table lamps provided light to accompany the fire.

Hopper stood in the kitchen and El by the fire. Even after 72 hours, the child still couldn't shake the 'cold'. He poured himself a cup of coffee and reached for another mug. He wished he had tea or cider, but this would have to do.

"Coffee?" he asked, sheepishly.

"Yes," she replied, over her shoulder, still warming her hands.

First

After the ground rules were established, Hopper new that he would need to start teaching her...something. Though being Sheriff gave him a certain amount of experience 'dealing' with people, he knew that El needed more than a detached guardian. He decided to start with a word a day. He brought home a dictionary explained what it was and how to use it. He decided the first word he wanted her to know, to understand, was **safe**. He wanted her to know that she was safe and that it was important to stay safe. He hoped she would understand the difference.

Last

There were so many words she would learn, so many things out there, both natural and not so much, that would build her up and tear her down. He had been a parent before. And, as such, he wanted nothing but good for his girl. He wanted to share with her a word that would let her know she was loved, that she was valuable and treasured. When she emerged from the bathroom in her simple blue dress, he felt a lump in his throat.

"Pretty?" she asked, as if there was a question in his mind.

"Beautiful."

4. Chapter 4

A/N: Thanks for the reviews. These are a hodge-podge and don't follow a word limit. I may expand The Dustin-Lucas story. Enjoy.

Red

Dustin was already tired of Lucas and Max. It was bad enough that the red head had chosen his friend, but it was made worse when Lucas would bring up Dart and harp on his mistakes in front of her. His frustration finally boiled over one afternoon at Hopper's cabin. Lucas made a crack about Dart's escape though the Henderson storm cellar.

"What the Hell, Lucas?" Dustin said, angrily. "You weren't even there."

Caught off guard by his friend's sudden hostility, Lucas replied. "Chill, Dude. I know."

"No, you don't," Dustin said, hardening his tone. "Stop showing off."

Lucas looked at Max who looked at El who looked at Mike. Silence.

Dustin got up and left the cabin.

Grey

When it came to Dart, Dustin had to continually rationalize keeping him a secret from the Party. He knew what he was doing was dangerous. He could tell that the 'lizard' he found in his trash can was not local, much less of this world. However, it was cute and it made a funny sound. It seemed to like him and it loved the nougat he ceaselessly fed it. He watched it mutate before his very eyes, but wouldn't...couldn't kill it until the rationalization was overcome by the reality of a demodog! Even then, Dustin wouldn't be the death dealer.

White

Hopper didn't know much about angels, but he recalled some of the Sunday school stories he learned as a child. Angels were God's

messengers. Angels were also God's warriors. They were supposedly devoid of evil which made them innocent of any sin. His mind worked hard to remember, but he wondered if he cared enough to. The bottom line is that his daughter was an Angel. She was so pure, innocent of the larger world, and wanting to learn more and more each day. He wished that she would never be hurt again, that he could somehow keep her from world.

She *had* brought him a message. A pretty damn important one; one she might not be aware of. He smiled and made a point to tell her tonight when he got home. She let him know it was ok to start over. It was okay to love another child. She brought him the message that he was being given a second chance. He wouldn't fail her.

There was the other side of her; the warrior. She was strong. So strong. Strong enough to face the world, to face the darkness she would inevitably encounter. Strong enough to protect him and her friends. She would be strong enough to face God's enemies. If there was anything that was an enemy all that is good and Holy, it was the Shadow living behind The Gate.

Black

Jim Hopper was in a black mood. His charge had just blown out the windows of their home as the culmination of a telekinetic temper tantrum. He was thankful that force of that power was not directed him at him, even if it was about him. She went into her room and slammed the door, leaving him outside and unable to get in. He yelled at her to open up.

It was the prerogative of all parents to *want* to throttle their children, but it was incumbent upon them not to actually *do* it. On top of all of it, he was out of cigarettes.

Red 2

It was weird to see Dustin really pissed. He had stormed out of the cabin so quickly that no one immediately followed. After a beat, Lucas stood and followed his friend out the door.

"Dustin!" he called, wanting his fellow Party member to turn and

acknowledge him. "Dustin."

The other boy was walking, rather quickly, down the dirt road that led to the cabin. He was not interested in apologies or explanations. He just wanted to get away.

Realizing that Dustin was not going to stop, Lucas started running to catch up.

"Dustin, stop!" Lucas said as he reached the other boy and grabbed his arm to turn him around. "What's this about?"

The momentum of Lucas pulling Dustin around, brought a stiff arm into his chest. He staggered back step.

"Leave me alone, Lucas!" Dustin cried. "I'm done talking."

Lucas opened his arms helplessly. "We haven't even started talking."

"And we're not going to. Get lost, Sinclair."

Lucas knew it was serious because Dustin hardly ever called him by his last name.

"Is this about Max?" Lucas tried.

Dustin just kept walking.

5. Chapter 5

A/N: Thank you to my-secret-garden for the awesome reviews for each chapter. I wish I could have sent you a PM. This chapter is a Hopper stream of consciousness. I hope you enjoy.

Eleven

There were times when Hopper wondered how Jane was able to stay innocent, how so much adversity had still managed to produce a good kid. He tried not to dwell on her lack of socialization, lack of nurture, and lack of education. His girl had been in survival mode. She knew what she needed to do to stay alive, to bide her time and her power for the possibility of escape. He had to wonder if escape was ever on her mind. If it was, what would she do once she escaped. The Sheriff chuckled at his thought process. She would have done just what she did. She would have looked for help.

Benny

El had told him how nice Benny had been to her. He had given her food and tried to warm her up. He had spoken good words and never once showed her 'mad'. It was hard to imagine what one would do when faced with a girl who didn't speak, wore nothing but a hospital gown, and had a virtually shaved head to boot. He was thankful for Benny's kindness and would never forget it. In fact, during that first year, they had gone to Benny's grave. El had wanted to. Her time with him been short and, ultimately, just another trauma to throw on the heap, but it was meaningful and El would not be denied.

Mike

Hopper and El had a lot of time together; a lot of time to talk, a lot of time to yell. A lot of time to break things. But the talking happened the most. El didn't talk much and most of what she learned was from the television. You can imagine the amount of redirection and explanation that went on. Aside from that, the only thing she wanted to talk about was Mike. Hopper didn't know the kid very well, but his part in El's journey today can't be ignored. Though Hopper was privy to much of what went on after El left Mike's house, it was his ongoing

'privilege' to hear is daughter tell him about all Mike did. Clothing. Shelter. Friendship. Kindness. Understanding. Patience. Love. That last one wasn't his favorite. They were kids for Heaven's sake. But, Wheeler was instrumental in keeping her out of sight of his parents, or anyone else, for as long as he could. As hard as it was to acknowledge the 'love' they professed, it was hard to deny that El was here, now, because of the Wheeler kid.

Brenner

His mind wandered back to the DOE and Hawkins Lab and Martin Brenner. Fucking Bastards. What kind of sick Son of a Bitch does that to a baby girl. Twelve years. Born into captivity. Born into slavery. He knew if his mind steeped itself too long in Brenner's machinations, it would take him to a dark place. He took solace in the fact that the mad man was dead. Or was he? Doc Owens had opened the rotten apple core of the possibility that El's 'Poppa' was still out there. Just dandy. For now, it didn't matter. For now, she was safe. For now, she was loved. She was no longer a victim. She was no longer ignorant. She was his daughter. She was Jane Hopper and he would storm hell again if that is what it took to giver her the life she deserved.

6. Chapter 6

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Bland

Sick stinks! El's body ached. Her head hurt. Her nose ran. She had to blow her nose all the time which made it red and raw. There was one thing that she thought would make her feel better. She hunched over the toaster feeling the heat on her face while waiting for the golden disc to pop into her hand. She pulled her blanker tightly around her, trying keep the 'colder heat' from touching her. The Eggo sprung out of its chamber and she caught it in the air. She tore into it with her teeth, but as she chewed, she noticed something was wrong. The golden goodness didn't taste right. She looked at the box. Plain, like she liked. She wrinkled her nose and chewed more slowly, suddenly not in a hurry to swallow. She swallowed anyway. She took another bite. El never thought the day would come when Eggos didn't taste magical on her tongue. It had to be because she was sick. Sick stinks!

Sweet

The box of chocolate pieces was nice of Hopper, even after she had blown out the widows in a monster fit. He was gone again and she was missing Mike. She decided to make herself feel better by eating as many pieces as she could. What she loved most about chocolate was that it melted in her mouth. She supposed most candy did eventually, but not like this. And chocolate had so many uses. Chocolate cake. Hot chocolate. Chocolate milk. Oh, she loved that. Chocolate bars. Chocolate fudge. She had heard of that one, but hadn't tasted it yet. And chocolate covered things! Like the candies in her box. 'Whitman' must be a genius. There were so many different shapes and flavors and textures. And, when she removed each piece there was a name printed in the square. She liked 'caramel' and 'nougat' and 'cherries'. She really had to meet Mr. Whitman. He was her new hero. Mike could come with her. And, Hopper, of course. He would have to drive.

After each piece she ate, she tried to place the dark brown wrapper back in the empty square. It didn't work! The wrappers kept popping

out. Frustrated she took them all out of the box and piled them next to her on the couch. Soon, she realized that half the box was empty; and with that, the next piece was not so sweet. Her 'tummy' suddenly felt heavy. So did the rest of her body. This wasn't right. Chocolate was amazing! This was not amazing. This was 'Ugh'. She slid over onto the brown wrappers, which crunched beneath her, and moaned.

Bitter

El sat on her bed, fingering the eye holes in the white sheet that was going to be her Halloween costume. She had figured it all out. She thought of all the reason's Hopper would say 'no' and the answer for all of them was simple: No one would see her. She placed the sheet over her head and adjusted it so she could see through the holes. She was not the best at cutting, but she could see. That is what mattered.

She left her bedroom and found Hopper standing in the kitchen. He smiled when he saw her. He must think she is smart or 'clev-er' for thinking ahead. His smile faded when she pointed to the door. His head started shaking before he spoke.

Even though she thought 'out of the box', he still wanted to keep her inside of it. This made her mad and she would let him know it.

7. Fight or Flight

Fight or Flight

Max Mayfield knew it was now or never. Never seemed like and impossibly long time, like exactly the number of days before she would see El again. The cold shoulder she had been given since that night at the Byers' house was getting old. She was in with Will, Dustin, and, Stalker. Even Mike had made softened a bit. But, El wouldn't budge. She was distant at party meetings and, rarely, when they were left alone together, the other girl would stick to one or two word answers effectively killing any possible conversation. Max knew that the brunette was a girl of few words, but Max wasn't fooled by the ignorant act.

Given that Hopper would only allow his daughter to see them once a month, Max knew she needed to force the issue or suffer the agonizing wait to have another chance. She decided to throw down the gauntlet, which was a night metaphor for the boys, but probably lost on El. She asked the boys to give her a moment alone.

"I think it's time you and I had it out," Max said, coming directly to the point.

"Had it...out?" El replied, unsure of the meaning of the phrase.

"Yeah, I think as long as we are going to be enemies, we should probably have a fight." Reverse psychology! That ought to do it.

"Why would we fight?" El asked, concern showing in her slightly knitted brow.

"You couldn't use your powers, of course," Max continued as if she hadn't heard the other girl. "That would be unfair."

"Why would we fight?" El said again, making sure that Max heard her.

"Let's put it this way. If we aren't friends, we're enemies. If we're enemies, I have to leave the party. If I have to leave the party, that

would suck and I would be mad. When I get mad, I want to hit something. Follow me?"

"Like Billy hits you?" El said, quietly.

Max's eyes grew wide and her temper edged higher. "What did you say? Who said Billy ever hit me?And,,who are you to talk about Billy? You barely talk to me and now you want to comment on my family life?"

"Mike said I should try to be more dip...diplot...friendly."

"This is a fine way of showing it, El," Max replied, still angry over the Billy comment. "Friends don't judge!"

Mike poked his head back into the door of the cabin. El looked at him and, wordlessly, gave a quick shake before Mike could speak. He disappeared outside.

El looked at Max for what seemed like the first time. It hard to describe the feeling of being truly seen by someone. Especially, some who had been purposefully trying not to see you. El's soft brown eyes had lost their coldness and there was an inviting warmth where, previously, there had been a roadblock.

"I am not judging you, Max," El said, softly. "I know what it's like. People being mean to you."

Max was not so easily persuaded. "But you have been being mean to me by not talking to me. You froze me out. You wouldn't tell me why. You just did everything you could to ignore me. Do you know how that feels.

"Yes," El replied. "I do."

"Then, why did yo do it to me?!" Max exclaimed.

El was unperturbed, which infuriated Max. How was the girl so calm in the face of how she had treated Max? How was she so calm when Max was all but yelling in her face? It was maddening.

"I don't know," El said. "Best way to stay safe."

"Safe? From what? Me?"

"Being hurt, Max," El replied. "So much hurt."

Max's fury started melting. The lost girl had found a way to make Max look away from herself and think about her. From what Lucas and the rest had told her El had been through Hell since birth. It was hard to imagine. But, Max had had her own Hell to deal with. Losing her dad to divorce, getting a step dad who was violent piece of work, and a stepbrother who wouldn't bare the humiliation alone.

"I know, El," Max finally said. "I know. Me, too."

It was a weird time and place for this breakthrough to take place. Hopper would be here any minute to take them back the Byers'. El still needed to say goodbye to Mike. But, Max would not be denied. She extended her hand to El, a gesture of friendship. El closed the gap between them and hugged Max, hard. "I'm sorry," she whispered. "Friends."

Tears welled in Max's eyes as she returned the hug. "Friends," she replied into El's ear.

The hug was broken when the sounds of an engine could be heard coming up the path. El and Max hugged again and Max made for the door. She winked at El as she disappeared outside.

"Your turn, Fort Boy," she said to Mike.

Dustin laughed hysterically. "She called Mike Fart Boy!"

"Not Fart Boy, Idiot," Lucas said. Fort Boy. Remember, the fort?"

"Of course, I do, Dunce Cap!" Dustin replied. "But Fart Boy was funnier."

"Thanks for clarifying, Stalker," Max said. " I could have done that myself."

8. Chapter 8

Salt in the Wound

It was day 135 of El's seclusion and no matter how much she stocked the fire, she could not escape the chill. The small cabin was drafty as as a matter of its construction, but if the fire was maintained there was ample heat to to stave off the cold. Not today. In addition to the chill, she could not get into her stories and the books Hopper left were stale from repeated readings. She decided to make herself a snack of Eggo and peanut butter only discovery a double whammy of disappointment. The Chief had left a virtually empty jar of peanut butter and only one Eggo was left in the box. Could this day get any worse? On top of it all, she missed Mike. Achingly. It seemed that the all the distractions she had put into place were gone and all that remained was the hole that Mike filled. Today, that hole was deep.

When Hopper came home that evening, he had to do the secret knock three times and the third was a jolting banging of the code. The locks opened and he opened the door. El was no where in sight and the door to her room was closed to only a crack.

"El?" he inquired approaching her door. He peered in only to find a mound of quilts and blankets that he only guessed she was underneath. "You okay, honey?"

"Cold," came her muffled voice from under the mound. "Hungry."

"I'm glad to hear that," he replied with an upbeat tone. "I brought teryaki."

Low moan emitted from her bed. She suddenly sat up, throwing back the blankets. "Eggos?"

He grimaced. "No, I forgot them. I'm sorry. I have teryaki."

She growled in frustration and laid down hard pulling the covers back over her head with only a thought.

He nodded to himself in acceptance of her mood and decided to try

and lighten things up with a bit of good news. "Guess who I saw as I was heading home?"

"Drn awy nilke," was the garbled response filtered though the series of blankets.

He ignored it. "It was Mike and Will coming out of the arcade. I waved and they waved back. Mike-"

The entire mound of flew at him covered him like a snow dropping from the branches of pines. He threw them off immediately looking at her with tempered annoyance.

"I said, 'Don't...say...MIKE!'" El screamed in frustration. Thankfully nothing was broken in the outburst. Hopper eased out of the room and waited for the storm to pass.

Sucker Punch

The speed with which Mary Rose had put her fist into El's nose stunned Max for a moment. The conversation had not been going well and the other girl was not willing to concede the basket to someone new to school and new to basketball as well. El reeled back an couple of steps, giving Max the time to step into space she previously occupied. Max was still relatively new to school as well, but she had experience with Mary Rose.

"What the Hell was that for?" Max barked, giving Mary Rose a two handed shove to the chest. "She made the shot and you fouled her!"

"She fouled me when pushed me before the lay in," Mary Rose replied, hands on hips. "No basket and no foul."

Max turned to look at El, whose nose was bleeding for a more obvious reason. The smoldering look on her friend's face. "You hit her in the face, Mary. After the play. You're done."

"Says who?" Mary Rose retorted. "Who made you queen of the court?"

Max stepped into the other girl's space and said: "Either you walk away or you're gonna bleed just like Jane."

El appeared at Max's side, wiping her nose on the shoulder of her shirt. "Don't fight, Max. Not worth it."

"Yeah, Max," Mary Rose mimicked. "Don't fig-"

Mary Rose's head jerked back and her eyes rolled up into her head. She staggered backward, stumbling and falling to the ground.

Max turned to El and shrugged her shoulders. "So worth it."

9. Chapter 9

A/N: I am going under take a writing challenge from another site. It was the fifth of the Drabble Challenges. Thematically, it as called 'On Air', Televi sion series providing the theme words for the 20 different 5 word prompt series. Each fic is 100 words exactly and can be connected, but not necessarily. 'Stranger Things' is my obvious fandom, but you can look for crossovers with many of the shows referred within. There may be a couple I am not familiar with, but I will fina a way to make it work I hope you will jump on board. It's gonna be fun!

Doctor

The small town of Hawkins, Indiana, in the States, no less, was a place the Doctor never thought he would end up. As he exited the TARDIS, in the middle of a pumpkin field, he was assaulted by the odor of rotting vegetation. Taking in the scene before him (and waving his Sonic to and fro), the Doctor realized exactly why Sexy had brought him. Sadly, a root deep infestation by another-worldly virus was not sexy at all. The trail led east toward Hawkins Lab. If the virus had broken through, the lab may well be the point of origin.

Companion

The Doctor was not presently traveling with anyone, for which he was thankful. He hated hearing the complaining of his companions when the missions, or fun disguised as work didn't live up to their expectations. The Doctor disliked encouraging them to be open minded and look for the silver lining even in the most boring of places.

A dark stairwell inside a strange lab was not exactly tedious, nor was the portly, perspiring man standing in from of you staring agape.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the Doctor.

"Shhhh!" the other man hissed. "Do you want to get us both killed?"

Time

"Not my plan, no," The Doctor replied, quietly.

"Who are you?" the man asked, curiosity growing. "Where did you come from? What is that?"

The Doctor looked over his shoulder following the man's outstretched hand. "Oh that. That's my time machine."

The other man, clearly desperate and fearing for his life, not from the Doctor's presence, but perhaps the virus, narrowed his to almost a squinting, and stared in disbelief.

"Time Machine? How-It doesn't matter. The demon dog is not far and unless you have big gun, we're screwed."

"Screwed is relative, my lad. Follow me."

Space

Pivoting on his heels, the Doctor threw open the TARDIS door and bounded inside. He motioned for the man to follow. Suddenly there was the sound of fast paced clicking on the floor behind them. The timelord turned and stared past the portly man, frozen agape once again, and saw the aforementioned demon dog barreling toward them. No demon was getting into his ship. A piercing scream filled the hall and invaded is sanctum. The dog's face was open like a mutant flower. Extending the Sonic, he shut the doors just in time to hear the thud of dead demodog.

Dimensions

"It's-" the stranger began, staring at the size of the room he had entered.

"Let's not do that this time, please," The Doctor admonished.

"I'm Bob Newby," the man offered. "And, if this place is any evidence, you've arrived just in time."

"I usually do," the timelord replied. "I am The Doctor."

"A doctor?" Bob said, shaking his head. "No. We need more than a

doctor. The Mind Flayer is a creature from the upside down, another dimension. We need help to kill it!"

"Have no fear, My Good Man. The Doctor is in."

10. Chapter 10

A/N: Not a crossover this week, but pretty angsty. I hope you enjoy!

Island

It was a week into 1984 when Hopper brought home a calendar. El had seen calendars in the Lab. But never up close. She remembered seeing puppies, canyons, and even laser swords. This one was different. This one had water so blue she hardly believed it was real. There was 'sand' so white it looked like snow. In one picture there were mountains surrounded by water and, in another, only a single tree on a small 'beach'. Some pictures had small boats, others large cruise ships. It was a magical vision, a world so beautiful it could not be real.

Survival

In his dreams Mike tries to dissect the explosion, discharge of mental energy that killed the Demogorgon and took El away from him. He would freeze the moment in time and look at it from all angles; wanting a hint of what happened to her, where she went, was she alive, would she survive. Did she teleport? Was that even a power she had? Had she dissipated, burning up in energy she wielded? Was she somehow sucked through a different gate passage into the upside down? If she had survived, they had to go after her. They absolutely had to.

Lost

There were times, in his darkest moments, when Mike Wheeler thought of leaving life. Times when he could not find a way to expel Eleven from his mind. It was only in those blackest times that he would even consider ridding himself of her. Like breaking an addiction that is killing you. His love would turn to hate, hatred of himself, and hatred of the girl he loved, the girl whom had given her life to save him. All of them. How could she know what her selfless act would end up being an unending prison of grief and despair?

Other

"Are you dreaming?" Dustin asked Lucas as they two of them biked to school.

"Of course I'm dreaming," Lucas retorted. "I'm still alive, right?"

Dustin rolled his eyes. "Be serious, for a minute, Dude! Do you have nightmares?"

"Why would I tell you if I was having nightmares?" Lucas said. "That is my business."

"Who else are you going to tell, Mr. Cool? There are only a few of us who know about the other place and what lives there."

"It's gone, Dustin. El killed it. There aren't any more."

Dustin peered over his sunglasses. "Are you sure about that?"

Flashback

What haunts El in her dreams is the moment she thought she would die; the moment when all of the energy within her was being directed outward. Her mind was on the monster, but he heart was with Mike. If she died, she would never see him again. But, if she didn't kill the Demogorgon, the same result would occur. She had no choice. She had to save Mike whether she died or not. It was so hot; her whole body felt like it was going to explode. She just needed to hold on for a few more seconds. *Mike…*

11. Chapter 11

A/N: Okay, so screw the 100 word rule. These drabble will be what they will be. Enjoy. If anyone wants to make requests, I'm open to it. This thread includes longer scenes as well as short ones.

Stranger Drabbles 11

Far

"Are we there *yet*?" El demanded.

"Not even close, Kid," Hopper replied. "Hours to go before we sleep."

"Hrrmph!" she grunted, folding her arms. "Why is it so far? I have to go."

"Go where?" Hopper deadpanned. "We're already on the way."

"You know what I mean," El said, glaring adorably.

"Of…course I do. Can you hold it or do you want to go in the woods?"

She shifted from glare to 'dopy dad' face in a heartbeat. "The woods is 'old school'.

He smiled in acceptance and pulled the Blazer to the side of the road.

Prisoner

Eight year old Eleven screamed knowing her defiance would get the required punishment. She fought, feebly, against the strong hands which grabbed her and roughly carried her toward that dark, cold, silent place. He screams were ignored; her tears cast aside. Pappa did nothing, but follow them down the corridor. There was no expression of love, hate, anger, or kindness in his features. His hands were clasped behind his back. As the bad men tossed her into the cell, her Pappa simply stared at her. The door closed, but his eyes remained in the window. Tears of shame flowed freely.

Peacekeepers

Jim and Joyce had been married for 3 months before the first argument cracked the blissfully of their new home together. Joyce had purchased a new coffee pot which she thought would please Jim, but the expense of the coffee maker, mixed with stress from work had set him off.

Will and El retreated to El's room as the fireworks began, but it did not last long. El emerged, and with a self-satisfied countenance, used her powers to open the cupboards and dash a couple of plates in the kitchen. This calamity broke the back of the first one and peace was restored. El did not mind sweeping up the pieces.

Uncharted

AU WAX

Max Mayfield was fascinated by Will Byers. Ever since she met the soft spoken boy she was taken with him. There was so much chaos in her life, so much noise, both physical and metaphysical, that she needed the quiet understanding he provided. She would have to do something about his hair, but is welcoming eyes and his shyness compelled her to know him better, to crack his shell. She smirked at the thought that both Lucas and Dustin were stumbling over each other for her affections. Little did they know that she had already given them to Zombie Boy.

(E)Scape

Why are we here?" El asked, leaning against the chair Hopper was sitting in. Her head lolled and the exhaustion of making nice made her look like she had been 12 rounds with Ali.

"Because we were invited," he ground out through a forced smile. "It's called being polite."

"Is it supposed to be this painful?" she whispered.

El and Hopper watched as his ex-wife Diane and her husband played with their new baby.

"Sometimes, Kid," he replied. He motioned to her to go play with the baby, but she was having none of it. It was a silent, odd back and forth with raised eyebrows and gritted teeth. It culminated with El nodding at the glass of Coke that was on the table next Hopper's chair. The glass tipped over spilling its half full contents into Hopper's lap. He leaped from the chair and did a hilarious little dance before declaring that they needed to head home.

"Not this time," El said with a wink as soon as got back to the Blazer.

12. Chapter 12

Stranger Drabbles 11.5

Totally Random couple of drabbles…

Awkward

"Are you sure Lucas will be okay with this?" Dustin asked, pointedly.

"I'm not worried," Max replied. "He's sick. When you're sick, you miss out."

"But it's just the two of us. Not official party business."

"Relax, Dustin. We're friends. We were friends before Stalker and I got together."

"But, I liked you, too. Doesn't that make this weird?"

"Only as weird as you make it. Do you still like me?"

"No!" Dustin said a little too emphatically.

"Then shut up! That much preamble on two friends going to the arcade is ridiculous. Are you trying to kill the mood?"

"The mood? There's a mood?"

"A gaming mood, you Idiot," Max shaking her hard and rolling her eyes in exasperation.

"Ah," he replied with a knowing smile. "Right."

"So, what's your pleasure?" Max asked opening her arms wide to the digital wonderland of color and calamity; a world that could inspire your dreams or set fire to them. All for 25 cents.

"You keep saying weird stuff, Max," Dustin answered.

She turned to his so fast that her orange hair almost hit him in the face. "God, Dustin, Drop it! We're either going to play or you're going

to leave. I didn't bring you here to make a move on you, okay? YOU are making this weird. So, what's going to be?"

"Let's play!"

Remember

There were days, though few and far between, when El allowed herself to remember Hawkins; to remember a time of relative peace and love and friendship. It was a box, deep inside of her that could only be opened when she felt like the next mission would be her last; that the Great and Powerful Eleven would be brought down by her successors in the 'mutant baby farm' program. Sadly, Hawkins Lab had not been the only horror show out there. But, she didn't want to think about that right now. She wanted to remember.

She remembered Mike kissing her softly as they danced at the Snow Ball 1984. She remembered his rage at her Dad for keeping her survival a secret for a year. She remembered Mike's proposal of marriage in summer 1989. The summer before it all ended.

She remembered Hopper finding her in the woods after she had escaped the Upside Down. She remembered his kindness and gentleness for such a grumpy bear. She remembered him reading to her and holding her hand when the nightmares were constant.

She remembered him carrying her from the gate. Her guardian. Her protector. Her Dad. Finally, she remembered his smile and the tear that streaked his cheek when she and Mike told him they were getting married.

She needed to remember. Because if she didn't, there would be no reason to go on.

13. Chapter 13

Stranger Drabbles 12

Will/Max AU

Smart

It seemed there was nothing Will Byers could do to escape the bullying. He was short. He was smart. He was abducted. His mom was weird. His brother was creepy. It was inescapable. The last thing he wanted, at least he thought he didn't want it, was for a brazen red headed firestorm to fall in love with him. Because when you have a kick ass girl in love with you, she wants to fight all the battle you can't fight for yourself. This chaffed on Will, but he knew he could talk to her about it. She couldn't keep running off the assholes intent on tormenting him. He would have to take it or stand up for himself. He didn't expect her to understand what it meant for a girl to fight a boy's battles, but he would try to explain. She had already told him that she did it *for* him, but had to stop. She could patch his wounds or listen to his war stories, but not fight in his place.

99

Will and Max laid on his bed, side by side, an awkward silence occupying the crevice between them. They both stared at the ceiling.

"I thought you might not understand," Will said. "It was hard for me to say."

She shook her head in denial, somewhere between hurt and anger. Or, maybe just denial. "I can't stand by and allow those jerks to treat you like that. What kind of girlfriend would I be if I did that?"

"The kind I need," he said to the ceiling.

"But, if you won't fight for yourself…"

He turned on his side, and looked into her blue eyes, welling with tears. "Look at me, Max. What kind of fight am I going to put up? If I fight, I get pummeled. If I don't, I'm ashamed, but no cuts or bruises.

Lose. Lose."

"It's not lose-lose, Wil," Max said, softly. "I don't had to fight for you. We can fight together. They may have gotten to you 99 of 100 times, but wouldn't they be surprised to have Will Byers showing some cojones."

His weary face cracked a smile. "Cojones?"

She smiled, too, causing a tear to escape her left eye. He wiped it away with his thumb and followed it with a full kiss on her lips. She responded, returning his kiss.

He broke the kiss, breathlessly.

"We can get through this together, Will," she breathed and kissed him again.

Chief

It was Friday night, a month after the Snowball. Jim Hopper sat the Byer's dinner table across from Will while they waited for Joyce and El to 'get their faces on'.

"So," Hopper began, gleefully. "Mad Max, huh?"

Will smiled despite himself. "Yeah, I guess so."

"You guess?" Hopper lightly admonished. "If you're not sure, she won't be either."

"It was a bad word choice, Chief," Will replied. "Max and I are good. Kind of a dream, you know."

"Do you like her?" Hopper asked with genuine interest.

"Absolutely," Will confirmed, eagerly. "She's amazing."

"Not too much for you?" Hopper added gently.

Will looked at Hopper, who sipped coffee from a Darth Vader mug. He could find nothing to convince him to be anything but honest.

"Sometimes. She's so dynamic. And, loud, too."

"I thought so," Hopper said. "Are you managing it okay? Do you guys talk?"

"I'm fine, Chief," Will said. "Thanks for asking."

"Sure thing, Kid," Hopper responded. "And, call me Hopper. You know, between the two of us."

"Okay, Chief," Will said through a smirk.

Agent

At first he couldn't believe that Max Mayfield liked *him*. He was sure it was Lucas or Dustin, after all the time she had spent with them over the last few weeks. But, no, she was into him. He really wasn't sure how to handle it. She blew into his life all spunk, energy, rage, and sadness. She was quick tempered, a cliché for redheads, but true of Max. She was hard and awkward, but fun and adventurous. She was tender, rarely, but it was a sight to behold. She was fragile, but only in private, when no one but Will could see. She had chosen him, the most unassuming boy in the party; the one with the least to offer. Or so he thought.

Shoe

"Then the shoe was flying at my head!" Max exclaimed. "For no damn reason!"

Max and Will were skating and biking home after school when Max began the story of how Billy had found a pair her shoes in the hallway outside his bedroom door. She asked him to toss the shoes into her bedroom when he decided to throw them at her instead.

"That's awful," Will said, seriously. "Did he hit you?"

"No," Max declared. "But not for lack of trying. Things been a little better since the syringe incident, but he's still a jerk and stuff is still travelling downhill from my stepdad."

"I wish there was more I could do," Will said in frustration. He

stopped his bike in the middle of the road.

Max stopped and skated back to him. She took his hand from the handlebar and squeezed it tightly. "You do more than you know. Having someone to tell these things to, someone who cares about me. You're my best friend, Will. Just like you don't expect me to fight your battles, I don't expect you to fight mine."

"I don't fight my battles, Max. We fight our battles. And, that goes for you too."

Max furrowed he bronze brows playfully and punched him in the shoulder. "That was full grilled cheese, Mister."

"Maybe so," he replied. "But true none the less."

14. Chapter 14

A/N: I just wanted to touch base and let everyone know that my drabble threads can go in a lot of directions. I like to use AUs, crossovers, time displacements. I like to explore non-canon ships as well as non-canon themes. However, for the most part, there is the show and canon and that's meat and potatoes of my fics. So, I hope you will continue to enjoy Stranger Drabbles going forward. I have a lot of fun writing it.

Super

While watching the movie Superman, El turns to Mike and asks. "Do you love me like Clark loves Lois?"

"Of course," Mike responds, immediately.

"Would you turn the world to save my life?" she asks innocently.

"I would do anything in my power to save you, El," he declares.

"Will you carry me in your arms as we fly over the city?" she continues.

"I will carry you wherever you want to go, but if anyone is going to fly, it's going to be you."

She giggled at that and snuggled her head into the crook of his neck and continued watching the movie.

Bat

El's attention was rapt to the screen as 'As the World Turns' spun its soapy web. Out of the corner of her eye, she caught movement in the ceiling. She looked up and saw the small winged creature fluttering silently near the rafters. She screamed despite herself and jumped from the couch, following the creature as she backed toward the door. The flying animal dove at her causing her to raise her hand just as it banked away from her and toward the kitchen. Lowering her hands, El followed the creature trying to determine what it was. Was it from the other side? Was is spy of the Mind Flayer? She could simply swat it with her mind, but she it was not her first choice. She

opened the door and moved into the doorway. El spent the next ten minutes waiting for the creature to come her way. When it did, she simply gave it a telekinetic push out the door. Later, Hopper explained that it had been a bat, a night flyer, and given the age of the cabin, she may see more of them. She was ok with that.

Wonder

Halloween had come again and as the party decided on their costumes, El worried that nothing seemed right for her; not the ghost she once wanted to be, not Wonder Woman, too colorful, not Cyndi Lauper, too loud. Not Anne of Avonlea, too plain. It was when El was the most dejected, that Dustin floated a brilliant idea.

"El should go as herself! How awesome would that be? We could even shave her head."

"Yeah, no," Mike replied, sarcastically. "We are not shaving her head!

The party all looked at El to see what she thought. Her eyes smiled and mischievous smile curled her on her lips.

"We're not shaving your head, right, El?" Mike asked, nervously."

He eyes flicked to Dustin. "I liked it."

Dustin grinned and puffed his chest in pride.

"El?" Mike inquired.

"I'm not going to shave my head, Mike," she said. "I won't have to."

"Darn straight, she won't," Dustin burst in. "Blond wig!"

El laughed. She and Dustin were in tune on this one.

"You want to go as *that* El?" Lucas asked, immediately seeing the brilliance of it. "Makes sense."

"That El?" Max asked. She had heard stories, but never knew what El looked like back then.

"El wore a blonde wig and a pink dress that Mike got from his sister. We had to be out in public and it was the best disguise we could come up with on short notice. Right, El?" Lucas said.

Her eyes were bright with excitement. "Right."

"It was kind of a weird riff of Dorothy in Oz, if you ask me," Dustin added. Everyone looked and with pinched brows and shook their heads.

"No one asked," Lucas added, punching his friend in the shoulder.

"Are you sure that's what you want to do?" Mike as coming to sit by El in the love seat.

"Yes," she said firmly.

"And why not?" Dustin chimed in, again. "She was in that dress when she flipped the van. She was in that dress when she broke the asshole's arm and levitated Mike out of the abyss. She was in that dress when she killed the freaking Demogorgon! Her Mage Robes, dude!"

"Dustin, Shut up!" Mike exclaimed in exasperation. "Let El talk. Dude, she already agreed with you!"

El was too pleased with the idea to let any drama ruin her mood. She turned to Mike. "You have to find me a pink dress and blond wig, Mike. It has be right."

"I won't let your first Halloween be a bust,"

Mike said, earnestly. "I'll make sure we have everything."

"We could even fake the nosebleed!" Dustin enthused.

"You'll have the nosebleed, if you don't stop yelling in my ear!" Lucas barked.

Hawk

"You need to top that right now," Max demanded, without raising her

voice.

"What?" Lucas protested, playfully.

"I'm trying to study and you're being creepy?" Max said from her desk in the corner of her room.

Lucas lay on her bed with the perfect view of her heavenly profile. "I have to live up to my reputation," he replied.

She turned from her book in feigned frustration. "And, I have work to do. So you."

"That is definitely a sad story, Miss Mayfield, but what kind of Stalker would I be if I didn't stare at you long enough to make you uncomfortable. Now, come her and give me a kiss."

"You know if I do that, no studying is going to happened. We need to be good. At least until I'm done."

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean," Lucas continued. "There is a spot right below your right ear, a certain freckle, I'm very interested in studying."

15. Chapter 15

Stranger Drabbles

A/N: I never thought I'd use the term 'trigger warning', but here it is. This fic refers to a Columbine like shooting in an unknown area of the country. It is also in the wake of the tragedy that occurred in FL yesterday. There is nothing too strong, but it is the subject matter so keep that in mind. For me, 47 year me, Columbine, was unprecedented. It made no sense, but its example has led to that tragedy being more and more common and less and less shocking. It is sad. It is easy to talk about legislating weapons, but harder to think about changing our own behavior. Be loving. Be kind. Even in the face of the opposite.

Nothing

"Have you ever felt helpless?" Max asked, as she and Lucas shared a Saturday lunch at the 50 yard line of the middle school football field.

Lucas raised an eyebrow, about to expound on the African American experience, when he thought better of it. The question was not about him. It was clear there was something on her mind.

"Yeah," he answered, seriously. "I have."

"Of course, you have," she said, suddenly tuning in to him. She reached out and touched his hand. "Sorry…that was dumb of me."

The normally forceful and playful Max was not present. She was suddenly solemn and for a girl who regularly spoke her mind, she was having trouble getting to the point. He waited.

"There is nothing dumb about my Mad Max," he replied with genuine feeling. "What helplessness are you talking about?"

"Have you ever heard about something so terrible that happened to people you don't even know and yet there is nothing you can do about it?"

The normally forceful and playful Max was not present. She was suddenly solemn and for a girl who regularly spoke her mind, she

was having trouble getting to the point.

"You mean like what the Nazis did to the Jews or what African Americans suffer in the Deep South?" he asked, hoping he was getting what she was after.

"I guess so," she said, meeting his eyes. "Those were, and are terrible. But those are on such a larger scale. So much death, it's hard to make it make sense. You know what I mean?"

Again, Lucas reminded himself that his wasn't about him. "Yeah, I know that feeling, too. What happened, Max? What did you hear?"

"I talked to my Dad last night," she said. "I love talking to him. But he shared something that happened back home, at the high school.

Lucas was intrigued, but the level melancholy and, he guessed, pain, he was in Max told him to continue listening.

He said there was a shooting. A bad one. Twelve students were killed. Twelve kids…like us. Shot dead."

Lucas blinked as he absorbed the enormity of what she had just said. He looked at the ground as his brain processed the carnage it must have been.

"What?" he said, to say something, anything.

"That what I mean about helpless. A friend of mine was killed. I hadn't seen or spoken to her since we were in 4th grade, but she was my friend."

Lucas got to his knees and reached for her, but it was awkward. "God, Max, I'm so sorry. A friend of yours? I thought you said you didn't know the people."

"That was just an example, Lucas," she said, sadly.

He hugged her, however awkwardly, asking: "Are you okay?"

"No, I'm not okay, but I'm not crying myself to sleep either," she declared with a hint defiance. "Bottom line, I feel helpless to do

anything. It's so horrible. Apparently, the bastard who did it killed himself before anyone could get to him. Fucking coward!"

"For sure," Lucas agreed. "I can't believe that someone would do that at school. Kill their classmates? Middle School already sucks. I imagine High School will suck more. But, to bring a gun to school and start shooting people, that is messed up! The guy had to be crazy; had a screw loose or something."

Max nodded quietly. "I'm still in shock. I can't understand why this thing is hitting me so hard. I feel so edgy, but not angry if that makes sense. Like Anger is waiting for its turn, but Shock isn't done yet. What if Will or Dustin or Mike, or El got shot? What if it was you…or me?"

Still kneeling in front of her, Lucas cupped her beautiful, freckled face in his hands. "I would never let that happen."

"I know you mean that, Lucas," she whispered. "But, what if it was out of your hands? What if you weren't there? What if El got hit before she could hit back? She's telekinetic, not telepathic. What if-"

Lucas pressed his lips to hers softly, but with enough pressure to change her focus. Breaking the short kiss, he said: "It's okay, Max. It's going to be okay. I've got you. I know it hurts. I know you feel like there's nothing you can do. I feel that way too. Kinda sucks when we're the ones getting picked on. We're the ones getting singled out. We're the smart ones. But we're the ones who have to be better."

"That is"-she started.

"Pure golden wisdom, right?" he cut in.

"Not bad, Stalker," she replied, kissing him back. "Not bad."

"Not make light of this at all," Lucas said, arching an eyebrow. "But if El had gotten the drop on shooter, he'd be the only dead person at the school."

Max smiled with just satisfaction. "Got the right, Mister."

16. Chapter 16

A Falcon of a Different Sort

Lucas Sinclair silently cursed his father, whom he loved very much. The man had decided to teach him a lesson in humility and responsibility by providing him with a 1978 Ford Fairmount as his first car. It was 1987. When he arrived at Dustin's place on Saturday morning, the first words out of his friend's mouth were:

"What a piece of junk?"

"She'll make point five past light speed," Lucas retorted. "She may not look like much, but she's got it where it counts, jerkweed."

Dustin grinned at that open, the short, but heavy passenger door, emitting his trademark Chewbacca growl. "At least you have a car. Looks like my bike will be my transport for the foreseeable future."

Lucas shrugged and started the car. "You talk to Mike yet?"

"Yeah, he said to pick them up at his house. What about Max?"

"We heading to her place now," Lucas replied, giving Dustin a knowing glare.

"Yeah, yeah, I know," Dustin lamented. "Back seat when we get there. Wookies get no respect."

Lucas huffed out a short laugh. "Wookies get plenty of respect. Whiny kids from backwater planets sit in the back. Plus, it's Max, dude!"

"I'm not whiny," Dustin defended. "I'm you're co-pilot. Or, I used to be. Now, we have a princess."

"There is no 'now', Dustin," Lucas answered. "Max is not new. Max is who she is."

"The Princess," Dustin reiterated. "You better be careful, Bro. You know what they are said about Han in *Return of the Jedi*?"

"Han was just fine," Lucas growled, gripping the wheel tighter. "Nothing wrong with being in love. He was still a man."

Dustin smirked. "Speaking of being a man, did you check her wallet?"

"No, why would I check her wallet?" Lucas said, frustration mounting.

"For you man card, Dude," Dustin said, laughing at his own joke. "She's holding it, right? Like Leia has Han's."

"Shut the hell up," Lucas barked. "I'm this close to dropping your ass on the side of the road. Letting Harrington or your mom come get you."

"Sorry, Lucas," Dustin relented. "Just poking fun. Sucks being sidelined though."

"Yeah, I know," Lucas responded, hitting his friend on the shoulder. "Sorry I yelled. I'm still pissed about this tank my dad gave me. I was hoping for something newer and more stylish."

"Like I said, at least you have a car. In fact, you're the only Party member that does. That's something."

"I guess it is," Lucas agreed, nodding his head and giving the dashboard an affectionate rub. He looked at Dustin. "Thanks, Man. Gotta be grateful for what you have, right? Cars and friends."

Dustin returned a small smile. "Yep. Gotta be grateful."

Luca bared his pearly whites. "Wookies still sit in back when we pick up the princess."

17. Chapter 17

Fear Is the Mind Killer

Will Byers was scared. He had every right to be. Because the thing he was afraid of was something of which every human being on Earth should be afraid. Will's experience gave him a unique perspective; a unique understanding of the nature of the beast. What will wanted, today, was to tell the beast that his fear did not make him weak.

He stood outside the tool shed, which was mere steps from his back door. He had not set foot in the structure since the day of this initial abduction. It was now three months since El closed the Gate, since she freed him from unwanted imprisonment in his own body and mind. He would overcome this fear and he would do it alone. No mom, brother, or friends could do this for him.

Placing his hand on the knob, he turned it cautiously and pushed the door open. He stood at the threshold and peered into the shadowy interior. He had been terrified at the time, running on strength he didn't know he had, trying to out run the Demogorgon. He didn't know what he was running from, a man, a monster, or some amalgamation. He wondered if staying in the house would have changed the outcome. Probably not. He steps into the shed. He's shaking, that old fear rising, but he is also resolute.

*Fear is the mind killer.**

I will face my fear.

The shed seems smaller than it did that day. He stands taller to the workbench and he does have to stretch as much to pull on the light chain. The light came on illuminating the empty structure. He stepped further inside even as he heard the phantom growls of the monster invading his ears. He took a tentative step toward the back corner. The broken boards where the creature entered had long ago been fixed by his brother, but Will could see the beast rise before him like the shadow who came later. He took a step back.

Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration.

Bob had told him to stand his ground. To tell the bully to go away, that he had no control. That had not worked in the face of the Shadow, but was solid advice now as he faced only memories, shadows in his mind.

I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path.

An axe lay on the workbench where Jonathan must have forgotten to hang it up after splitting firewood. He took hold of it and held it like sword. It was heavy in his hands and he choked up on the handle like a baseball bat. The presence was still there, glaring as much a shadow can. In his mind, Will heard the piercing shriek of the creature. Gathering his courage, he swung the axe and bisected the presence, burying the ax into a beam on the other side of shed. Extracting the axe, he turn and saw the creature in full rage, its face open and it teeth bared. He rose the axe over his head and swung down hard cleaving the phantom in two and burying the axe two inched deep into the bench. The shadow dissipated like so much vapor leaving Will panting. He pulled the axe from the bench and replaced it on the wall rack.

Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain.

Reaching up to turn out the light, he took a final, scrutinizing eyes on the room. The shadow was gone. His fear of this place and what happened here was gone. The boy who remained was stronger for facing it; stronger for not allowing that part of his heart to die.

As he closed the door being him, he wondered why this fear had lingered so long, when he had already mastered the memory of his possessor. He decided it did not matter. Will Byers would no longer be mastered by his fears.

**Italics is quoted from Dune by Frank Herbert.*

18. Chapter 18

A/N: A little review from a different point of view. :-P

Dad

The people of Hawkins, Indiana knew Jim Hopper. They had known him as a mischievous child, a gruff, but honorable teen, and as a doting husband and father. That was before Sarah passed. The Chief had changed then, reverting to the gruff, but less honorable boy he had been. He had not cratered entirely, but Sarah's death had embittered him to a point that his wife could not console him. Their divorce was amicable, but it left Jim without a rudder. He continued to be the Chief of Police, doing a commendable job, but retreating into his grief and depression when not on the job. His reputation suffered when he began dating again, leaving a trail of scornful women in his wake.

According to some, it was the case of Will Byers' abduction that changed Jim Hopper; that revitalized him. Those close to the case said he was doubtful, at first, thinking that Will had simply stayed the night at a friend's house. But when it became clear that Will as nowhere to be found, Hopper came to life with a dogged determination to find him. When Byers' body was discovered at the quarry, the Chief was seized by a peculiar grimness, laced with denial and a galvanized resolve to discover the truth. A truth, that to all but few seemed obvious: Byers was dead.

Hawkins was shocked when a couple of days later Will Byers was found, scared and weak, but otherwise unharmed. Accompanying his return were rumors of black cars and vans in residential neighborhoods, a strange girl (nearly bald at times, longer blonde hair at others) appearing at the school and local market, and the true disappearance of teenager Barbara Holland.

Jim Hopper had changed. Though his gruff exterior was still in place, he seemed lighter on his feet and there was glint in his eye that belied a healing that he neither acknowledged nor spoke of.

18 months passed, without incident, until the day Chief Jim Hopper

appeared in the Middle School administrative office with a new daughter and a nervous smile.

Daughter

The people of Hawkins, Indiana did not know Jane Hopper. She was an enigma to most on first meeting her. She was shy, didn't talk much, and, when she did, it was with as few words as possible. She was a pretty girl with natural brown curls and brown eyes which both welcomed and warned everyone she encountered. She was slight, but not awkward as some girls her age. In fact, she walked with a purpose, appearing to lean into her walk, showing excellent control. This was not say that she was self-possessed and ready to take on all challenges. Her awkwardness was social rather than physical. The good news was that she seemed to have a ready-made set of friends who would help her fit in.

Jane arrived in Hawkins a few months after the Department of Energy closed the doors of their local lab. Murmurs from local conspiracy theorists hinted at Psychic experiments using children as Guinea pigs. Was Jane a cast off of the Hawkins Lab experiments? Discerning minds dismissed this out of hand and had no reason to disbelieve the Chief's story of a cousin out west whom had passed away leaving a 14 year old daughter without a parent or a home.

With all eyes on her, Jane Hopper remained contentedly reserved and only seemed to blossom in the presence of her new father, local teen Mike Wheeler, and their close knit group of friends.

Debut

Scott Clarke reviewed the day's attendance sheet, stopping momentarily on the name Jane Hopper. Today was her first day at Hawkins Middle. It was also his first day and he knew well that Chief Hopper, his daughter Jane, and the AV Club were instrumental in his transition to the new school. Obviously, they would not have been able to do it had he not agreed. However, given the pleading of students and the genuine request of the Chief, he had agreed.

He saw her enter the classroom with Mike Wheeler and Max Mayfield and smiled in greeting, adding an approving nod. He stood from his

desk and moved to the front of the class. A few students had yet to arrive, including Lucas Sinclair and Dustin Henderson.

"Okay, class," he intoned to get their attention. "Time to settle down."

He nodded at Mike and scanned the classroom as the rustling of papers and smatterings of conversation died away. He was pleased with way the class listened and prepared for 'home room'.

"My name is Mr. Clarke and I'll be your homeroom teacher and your science teacher this year. It is my first year at Hawkins Middle and I think that is a good thing for all of us given that I know many of you from last year. Before we go any further, I would like to introduce a new student. She is new to Hawkins, new to this school, and new to many of you. Her name is Jane Hopper."

He reached out his hand in a vague pointing gesturing in her direction. When she did not stand, he turned his attention to her more intently. She had flushed pink and seemed to be hiding behind her backpack which sat on her desk in front of her. He could see that Max and Mike were trying to encourage her, but it only seemed to make her shrink further into her seat.

He walked down the aisle to her seat and gestured for Max and Mike to end their motivations.

"Is everything okay, Miss Hopper?" he inquired with genuine concern.

Jane nodded, but did not speak. Though Clarke had met Jane before today, it was clear that she was mortified by his public introduction. He decided to let it go. He knew she was shy, but had not expected her to shrink in fear. As he turned back to the front of the classroom, he caught glimpses of Mike and Max mixing their pleading (for her to speak up) and understanding (of it being overwhelming) expressions. He smiled and started to address the class again. He was pleasantly interrupted.

"El," she said, softly.

He turned back to her raising his eyebrows in anticipation and curiosity. "Say that one more time, Miss Hopper. I didn't hear you."

"Please call me El," she repeated.

"It's a nickname," Mike was quick to add.

"Very well then, El," Clarke replied with a quirk of his lips. "Welcome. Okay, let's start the roll call."

19. Chapter 19

Debrief

When Hopper picked El up from school, he could tell something was wrong. She had been apprehensive about her first day, which was natural, but she was, ultimately, determined to make the best of it. She opened the door of the Bronco slowly and tossed her bag into the foot well. She climbed in, buckled up, and stared out her window in heartbreaking silence.

He started the engine and pulled out of the parking lot heading home. He decided not to press her for details, but waited for her to bring it up in her time. When she had not spoken, or moved, in the ten minute drive to their relatively new home, curiosity got the better of him.

"You okay, kid?" he asked, with genuine concern.

"It was hard," she replied with tremble of emotion in her voice.

"Yup," he replied, nodding, as she finally turned toward him.

"Harder than I thought it would be," she continued. "I didn't-couldn't follow everything."

"I know, sweetie," he said, reaching for her shoulder. "We knew that might happened. Did you breathe like we practiced?"

"Yes," she answered, drooping her shoulders with a half eye roll. "But it was like I remembered too late."

"Yeah, it's like that for adults too. You'll get better? Wanna snack?"

He opened the door and exited the vehicle and came around as she got out. He extended his hand and she took it slinging her backpack on the opposite shoulder. They entered the small rambler, El dropping her backpack right inside the door, and turned right toward the kitchen.

She sat the kitchen table while he sliced apples. He waited some

more.

"Mike was weird," she said, seemingly confused by the fact. "He kept trying to cover for me. He was making excuses for my mistakes and trying to protect me too much."

He handed her the apple slices. "That sounds like Mike. But, don't be too hard on him. He wants what's best for you. Remember this was new for him too."

"You don't have to defend him, Dad," she replied. "I'm not really mad at him. I'm just…tired."

"Of course you are. You should be exhausted. You experienced a lot of new things today. It would wear anyone out."

She ate apple and stared out the sliding glass door into the back yard. She looked small and battle worn by the nightmare of middle school.

"It's like Mike doesn't think I can do it on my own. I told Mr. Clarke to call me El and Mike jumped in and made sure he knew it was a nickname. Later at lunch he explained how the lunch line worked. It was pretty obvious. And, more than that he was talking to people for me. Like he was my translator. I'm not a baby, you know!"

Taking her outburst in stride, he opened the fridge and pulled out a can of Sunkist and came to sit with her at the table. He popped the lid and slid the can next to her plate.

"You are no baby," he said, raising his eyebrows and grinning at her. "That is for sure."

"This is serious, Dad," she intoned, smiling despite herself. "I love Mike, but he was so annoying today."

He had long ago decide to let the *love* word lie, but it still gave him pause when she said it. "I can see how annoying it would be if you thought he was trying to baby you. But, consider it from Mike's side. He…loves you and he wanted you to have the best day possible. He may have gone overboard, but he was still trying to make your transition easier."

"Ugh. If that was easy, then I do not want to see hard."

He chuckled at that and took a slice apple from her plate and popped it into his mouth. "Anything else happen?"

"I got a bloody nose," she deadpanned.

He stopped chewing. "You what?"

"I got a bloody nose," she repeated.

"And, how did that happen?" he inquired, skeptically. "You know what we talked about."

"There was this this girl, Christine," El began, soberly. "I was opening my locker and having trouble with the combination. I want to break the lock, but I decided not to. Christine came over and started to be mean about the locker problem and other stuff too. Mike came over and tried to get her to stop, but she was an 8th grader and didn't listen. I finally popped the lock and swung open the door right into her chest. She was…er…pissed and slammed it back in my face. I was faster and kept the door from hitting my face, but hid behind the door long enough for my nose to bleed on its own. When I closed the door her eyes went wide and she ran away fast. I grinned at Mike and he laughed. It was a good time."

Hopper's doubtful gaze stayed on her even after she stopped talking. His mounting frustration just as quickly began to ebb away and his stern looked flipped to a mirthful smile.

"Sounds like you handled it perfectly, Kid."

"I think so, too," she said, simply.

"You know the rules, though, El," he added. "You can't be doing that kind of thing at school."

"I know, Dad. From now on, the only bloody noses will be fist-to-face."

His little girl had the nerve to wink at him. He reached out and mussed her mop of brown curls.

"Only if they put their hands on you," he amended.

"Only if…yes."

20. Chapter 20

Vexation

Mike Wheeler could not muster the energy to get out of bed. His mother had already called twice and dear old dad would be marching up the stairs any moment to get him moving. Though he would prefer to avoid a confrontation, he just couldn't muster the 'want to' to get out of bed. It was day 29 since El had vanished and it already sucked just was much as the 28 days before it.

He turned to his right and spied the the digital clock on desk. 7:03. He was only thirty minutes behind schedule and if he didn't eat his All American breakfast of bacon and eggs and toast and orange juice, he might still make it. A frosted strawberry Poptart would be nice...and fast. But, no. Mom didn't like her kids having 'pure sugar' treats for breakfast.

With effort, Mike threw back his blanket and sat up. That was a far as he got before visions of El in a sleeping bag up to her neck smiling loving up up at him. His chest clinched and the moment of peaceful joy was swallowed up by the knowledge of the truth. El was gone. Gone, but not forgotten. Gone, but not dead. Gone, but not available to love. His mood darkened and the prospect of a fight with his dad seemed more and more inviting. He laid back down and folded his hands behind his head.

From his upper bunk, he saw the door open before he heard the light squeak of the hinges.

"Michael," his dad said in that dull monotone that made Mike want to rip his hair out. His dad was tall and his head and shoulders rose about the bed frame. "Your mother has called you to breakfast twice. What is the hold up?"

"I'm not feeling so hot, dad," Mike groaned, feigning illness. "I threw up in the middle of the night."

Ted Wheeler looked caught between fight or flight and disdain for his son's antics. It was confusing to Mike for many years until he realized

that his dad didn't give a crap as long as he wasn't inconvenienced. This gave Mike special talent as long as he didn't push his advantage too far.

"Does that mean you're not going to school?" Ted asked, as if that fact were all that mattered.

Mike screwed up his face. "Gee, son, I'm sorry you're sick. What is it that feels yucky?"

Ted's face seemed to set like wet concrete. It was hard for Mike to tell if anything had changed when his dad's full range of expression consisted of tiny shades of disinterest.

"You better check that attitude, Michael," his dad droned. "I won't have it and I don't want your mother dealing with it either."

"Why would I give her any attitude, Ted," Mike said, pointedly. "At least she cares if I'm sick or not."

Ted took the provocation in stride and replied: "Are you sick, Michael, or are have you been smoking pot out in the tool shed?"

"What?" Mike exclaimed, incredulously. "Smoking pot, Dad? That's all you've got? Yeah, that's me, dad. Don't you know it! I roll my own joints and get high every day."

Mike climbed down from his bed and went to his dresser for clothes.

"What should I be thinking, Mike?" His father inquired, dully. "You're moping around the house in a fog and this outburst is consistent with how you've been acting. You're moody an-"

Mike whirled on his dad. "You're damn right I'm moody, dad. This house is like a mausoleum. Everyone mopes around. Why am I so suddenly different? Did you even notice that my best friend was kidnapped and was missing for almost a week? Granted, he didn't die, but it was a big deal, dad. Remember Feds coming to the house?"

"Michael," Ted said blandly, still not rising to Mike's level of frustration. "I'll ask you one more time to calm yourself and find a respectful tone."

"Or what?" Mike nearly screamed. "You'll take away my toys?"

Mike could hear footfalls on the stairs as, no doubt, both Mom and Nancy came running. They both entered the room as Ted dropped his disciplinary bomb.

"Michael, I don't have to take your toys. You'll need something to occupy yourself when I take your friends...for a month."

"What?" Mike cried, anger fuming. His face colored and he began to tremble.

"Are you ready control yourself?" His dad asked, calmly.

Mike caught his mother's eye, before releasing a ragged breath. He looked his father in the eye. He had rolled the dice on his father lack of presence and it came up snake eyes. "Yes, sir."

"Now, get dressed and eat your breakfast. I'll be taking you to school."

He turned and left the room, brushing by his wife and daughter, who stood still, in momentary shock.

21. Chapter 21

A/N: From a *Stranger Things* prompt by Mira_Jade!

Throw a punch

In the year following the closing of The Gate, Hopper knew that being Dad meant teaching a horribly neglected teenager the basics of life, including how to navigate personal relationships.

Socialization.

He shook his head at the enormity of the task ahead. His little girl was 13 and a relative blank slate. Her speech was stunted. Her education was almost nothing. Her ability to deal with common emotions and social conflicts was reactionary. He had a lot of work to do and he decided the next lesson would be about self control. It was absolutely critical for a girl like El to be able to control her rage, separately and together, with the power she had within her.

It all sounded so ominous. But the lesson was born out of very simple question. It happened after dinner while the two were watching *Family Ties*.

"Dad," El asked, matter of fact. "What's a bully?"

He did not have the ability to stop the show in the middle, but it was El's choice so he decided to turn it off and address her question. The question did not immediately concern him given what he had seen her do, but his concern was more for her emotional welfare.

"How did that come up?" he asked nonchalantly.

"Mike has a bully," she said, a little forlornly. "Still."

"I would have thought those boys learned their lesson the first time around. Not that I condone breaking arms and making boys pee themselves when the situation is less...life threatening."

She smiled, but still appeared concerned and unsure.

"Well, to answer your question, a bully is person who feels bad about themselves, or is embarrassed about something. So, in order to protect himself, or herself, they turn their anger outside of themselves, seeking weaker people to victimize."

El squinted her eyes and scrunched her nose as she said "Victim-ize?"

Hopper smiled, acknowledging that he took his explanation too far. "I'm sorry. A bully wants other people to feel bad so that they can feel better about themselves."

"Even though they feel bad inside?" El said, uncertainly.

"Exactly!" her dad replied, a little more excited than, perhaps, he should be. "I know it's complicated, but it doesn't mean you should let a bully be mean to you."

El shook her head emphatically. "No bully will hurt me, Dad. Or Mike. Or The Party. I will make sure."

Hopper inhaled, taking a moment to regain his calm. "I have no doubt you will, El, but you cannot use your power when you are out in public. We have already added that to the rules, right?"

She looked at him sheepishly, he lower lip protruding more than normal. "Right."

"What I need to do is teach you how to fight...without your powers. With your fists."

El's lips parted in a sinister grin and her voice lowered to a gravelly roughness. "Yeah, beat down."

Hopper's eyes widened and he shook his head again. "Where do you get this stuff?"

"Lots of tube, Dude," she retorted, playfully. "And Mike."

He knew that much was true.

"Come with me," he said, patting her knee and rising from the couch.

"Now?" she asked, puzzled. "You want to teach me now?"

"Why not?" he answered, enthusiastically. "No time like the present." Yes, he had just used that little cliché. Thankfully, El had never heard it before.

"The present?" she asked. "But, what about Alex P. Keaton?"

"The present means now, El," he explained. "Alex P. Keaton will be waiting for you next week."

"Awww...Dad," she whined as her shoulders slumped. Despite the complaints, she rose from the couch and follow him to the small place that separated the kitchen and the living room.

Hopper got his knees, took El by the shoulders, and positioned her in front of him. "I'm going to teach you to throw a punch."

Without warning, his new daughter stepped forward and punched him in the chest. It was a powerful punch, but one he knew was not meant to hurt him.

"How was that?" El asked, confidently.

"Not bad," he replied, rubbing the spot softly. "But what you do not want to do is let the other person know ahead of time that you are going to punch them. That is called telegraphing. Try that same punch again."

She threw the punch, but this time, he blocked it and with his other hand tapped her on the shoulder with this hand. She punched again which he blocked, but this time, she countered with her other fist and hit his left shoulder.

"Very good," he said, praising her adaptability. "Nice counter punch."

"Thanks," she said, breathing heavier than she should be.

"You okay?" he asked. "We didn't do that much for you to be breathing so hard."

El clenched her teeth and redness flushed her cheeks. "I do not like

bullies."

Hopper's face softened in compassion for girl who had been subject to the worst kind isolation by the worst kind of bullies. He reached for her and pulled her into this arms. She was stiff with the cold fury and rage he both understood and feared.

"It's okay, El," she whisper into her hair. "You are safe. Breath."

He could feel the rise and fall of her chest against his as it slowed and the tension in her body bled away. He pulled away from her, but not very far, and met her eyes.

"I love you, Dad," she said softly.

He could feel the tears welling in his eyes against his will. He hugged her again, the tears yielding to gravity.

"I love you, too. How about we watch *Newhart*?" he said though emotion. "It's no *Family Ties*, but it'll work, right?

"Right," she said, nodding her head once with emphasis.

They returned to the couch and snuggled up just as *Newhart*'s theme song ended. Hopper wondered if he had chosen the right time to teach her how to fight. He hadn't taught her much, but it would keep. She was a quick study, which surprised him not at all. She wasn't going to be boxing anytime soon, but it was clear that that if El need to put a down and mean girl or a mean boy, for that matter, she would able to handle herself just fine.

22. Chapter 22

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23. Chapter 23

A/N: This fic originated as a response to Mike's comment about Will not liking girls. It morphed into more of an introspection piece for Will to determine what his role is in the party and in life. It doesn't go too deep. None the less, I hope you enjoy.

The story in written in 2nd Person.

Trigger Warning: brief suicidal thoughts.

Are you Truly Alone?

You lay still on the ground outside the razed Castle Byers letting rain pelt your pale skin and already sodden clothes. You sob, quietly. You are truly alone. Even among your family and closest friends, you are alone. No one understands you. No one, other than your mother, knows what you needed. In this moment, you wondered if she even knows.

You can't move; don't want to, in truth. The rage was over, but the doubt is just beginning. You close your eyes as a streams of water run through your sockets, trailing out over your nose. Words and pictures filled your mind's eyes. All of them vying for prominence.

Are you the weakest link in the party?

What did you think we were going to do? Sit in my basement and play Dungeons and Dragons for rest of our lives?

Do your friends still need you as much as you need them? The painful answer is no. You would prefer to sit and play games and talk movies and fight action figures and fly spaceships forever, if you could. That is where you are at rest. That is when you are content. That, with your friends, is peace.

Are they moving on while you are standing still? Why are you standing still? You dealt with your fear, didn't you? Fear of monsters?

This isn't about Monsters, though, is it? This is about growing up. It's about girlfriends and kissing and breaking up and getting back

together. Stuff you have no concept of because you're still a kid. And, why not? Hasn't your childhood been stolen? Don't you deserve more time with Mike, Dustin, and Lucas without the distraction of girls?

It's not my fault you don't like girls!

What does Mike know about whether you like girls or boys or neither? Just because all your friends have a girl, or claim to, and you don't, doesn't mean anything. Just because you are the shyest of the Party, and the most socially awkward, doesn't mean you're gay. Did Mike even mean to infer that you were gay? He's your best friend. He knows you pretty good. But he didn't come running to apologize. He was frustrated! He was mad. He was thinking about Max and El and drama, drama, drama. But so were you! Angry, that is. They didn't see your pain. They only saw their own inconvenience.

On the other hand, what right do you have to put them into a mold that no longer fits? It fits you fine, but they are now too big. What the hell does all of this mean? Will you have to let them go? Do they want to? Will they pull you along with them, into a mold for which you are too small? If they cannot be with you and you cannot be with them, what does that leave? Isolation. Loneliness. A prospect that is simply unbearable.

You've been here before, Will. Facing the abyss. Ready to jump. Ready to end the pain or the inevitability of future pain. What are you going to do? Are you going to fight or fold? Persevere or pack it in. Why are you thinking about death? Do you really think that there is nothing to live for? No one who loves you?

Back to the Monster, eh? That twinge in your neck. The unending feeling of violation coupled with the relentlessness of being the victim. You weren't the hero, were you? They saved you. Twice. You sense it happening again. You're wondering if The Flayer is coming for you. Will they have to save you, again? You don't know. Do you? Shouldn't you find out? If it's not you, it will be someone else? Do you want someone else to suffer like you have? Is there a chance you could be the hero? I can tell you don't think so. But, guess what? This isn't just about you. This is about saving the world. Right? At the very least it's about saving Mike, Dustin, Lucas, Max, and EL. Your Mom, Dude! And, the Chief. You sounded a little like Dustin just then and a

small smile creased your cold, wet lips. You now realize that the heat of your anger has passed and lying on the ground in the rainy woods is not only freaking stupid, but stupid cold.

You push yourself up and stretch by raising your arms in the air. Your body feels like you have been sleeping for a long time. But it has only been a few minutes. It's time to go home. To face the music of whatever the Flayer has planned. To see your friends, despite the fact that things are changing. Does that change have to be bad? Are you willing to step out of your shell, if even a little bit? Only you can say.

24. Road Kill

*A/N:*This part of my drabble thread so there are five prompt headings which tell a cohesive, if short, story. This could be considered AU, but I prefer to call it speculation. I love the idea of Max as a hunter in the vein of Sam and Dean on Supernatural. Please don't be afraid to leave a comment to let me know I'm on the right track.*

Liftoff

It was 1991 and Max Mayfield had not left Hawkins since her graduation in 1989. She worked at the local bike shop through most of high school and even had an opportunity to become a partner in the store before Neal killed the opportunity by being unwilling to help. That had been the last straw for her mom who left him, and Hawkins, in the fall of 1990. Her mother had not left Max. The redhead had opted to stay, her Family now more than a mother whom would have to rebuild for a third time.

After the bike shop, Max made the leap to motorcycle repair and took a job at Nick's Motorsports. She had thrived there and was now one of Nick's top mechanics. When she was hired, she had told her boss that she had a vacation planned in the fall. He hired her with the vacation intact, which gave Max her the first good feeling about the job.

October had arrived and it time to go. Throwing her bag in the trunk, 'hunting equipment' included, she stepped into her Forest Green 1967 Ford Mustang and blasted out of the parking lot of her apartment building. Lucas was waiting for her eleven hours away at Hampton University. Her man was going into the Army and was going to be an officer. It was his second year of ROTC and she could not wait to see him in his uniform.

Max was thankful when El called her the night before and let her know that there was a target in Charleston, WV, about halfway to Hampton. She grinned at the prospect of a little fun to break up the monotony of the road.

Hazardous

Max's Thomas Guide sat open in the passenger seat next to her bulky satellite phone and the remnants of a Wendy's spicy chicken sandwich. As she entered Charleston, it was early evening and the riverside State Capitol complex was definitely as impressive as she had read about. As for the target, El mentioned that it was located in a rural area not far outside of town.

She pulled off the road three miles downriver after seeing the mile marker El had mentioned. The embankment was not very steep, but the grass was tall enough to potentially camouflage a full grown Demogorgan at Dusk. Popping the trunk, Max retrieved her shotgun and tool belt, which included two grenades, a hatchet, a small can of hairspray, a propane torch, and a flashlight. Steve's bat rested in back of the trunk space, secured by measurement but able to be extracted if necessary. She did not use it anymore, but kept it as a reminder and an inspiration; a reminder of the first Demogorgon skirmish and an inspiration for eradicating them from the face of the earth. Racking a shell into the chamber of her shotgun, Max closed the trunk and proceeded down the embankment in search of her next kill.

Intrepid

The shriek of the monster pierced Max's ears causing her to pause long enough for the creature, rising out of the water below her, to hit her with a wild left claw. She fell backward, landing with a wet smack. The gun fell from hands as did the flashlight. Suddenly, towering over her with a toothy, vibrating, open face, the creature swiped at her again, this time with its right claw. She rolled to the left, over her shotgun, barely avoiding the monster's sharp talons. Grabbing the shotgun and she continued to roll she sat up and fired. The blast hit the Demogorgon square in the chest, knocking it backward into the water.

Max stood up and stepped into the water, which was more even ground than the embankment. The Monster got back to its feet now screeching at a higher, pained, pitch. It was all she could do not to cover her ears. Bring the shotgun to bear again, she fired at the creature's head. She saw the head jerk and the monster fell still. Racking another shell into the chamber, she stood over it floating form and fired again.

Max's breath was coming hard and fast from the exertion, but the edge of her mouth quirked up in satisfaction. Another one bites the dust. Now, the hard part: getting the body into the woods on the other side of the highway. It would be a chore, but the burning and burial was its own reward.

As good as new

Within a couple of hours, the job was done and Max was ready to get back on the road. First, she would need to change her clothes . Checking herself for any injury that might have been missed, Max looked a mess. She wondered what Lucas would think if she appeared at Hampton with mud soaked pants and shirt, mud spattered hair and face, and a streak of Demogoron blood across her chest. Publically, it would embarrass him, given the rigid military discipline of the place. But, privately, he would be so turned on a cold shower would be necessary to turn him off. If she wanted to turn him off, that is.

Max pulled her duffel from the trunk and extracted a change of clothes. She stripped on the side of the road, using the Mustang as the best shield she could. Soon, she was good as new, minus a little mud in her hair. She would leave it there for Lucas to find and ask about.

Candles

Lucas met her in uniform because he knew that was what she wanted. He was not required to wear it all times. Hampton was not a military academy. She had jumped into his arms as soon as she was close enough and kissed him with such intensity that they almost went to the ground. She commented on the smartness of his dress and whispered unmentionable acts into his ear. He discovered the mud in her luscious red strands and she explained that the target was dispatched with minimal effort. When it came to hunting, Max used the term minimal effort for every encounter, no matter how close she came to death. This made Lucas worry. However, he knew she could take care of herself, and that on most hunts, she had partner. Usually, himself, when available, or Dustin.

When they reached his dorm room door, he stopped and took her into his arms, kissing her gently, but passionately.

"I have a surprise for you," he whispered, their lips having only just separated.

"Oh, really?" she answered, breathlessly, as she untucked his and ran her hand over his defined chest and abdomen. "What is that, Soldier Boy?"

He opened the door and back into the room, he noticed her looked over his shoulder.

Max saw a shimmering coming from Lucas' room and when he opened the door. The room was like any dorm room, with two beds and two desks on either side, but Lucas had strategically placed candles throughout the room, high and low. Safely, of course, and not too many. But enough to create an uber-romantic vibe that she was absolutely digging.

"Nice job, Stalker," she said, turning back to him and pinning him with a triple threat of love, lust, and a virtual lifetime of partnership. "My mood has definitely been enhanced by the lighting. But I think shower is in order before anything else. Can that be arranged?"

"Only with my close supervision," he replied, slyly.

"I wouldn't have it any other way."

25. Loving Spoonfuls 1

A/N: This the first of five five prompt set that are from a Fluffy/Mush challenge on another site. These will be drabbles fitting the 100 word limit per prompt. I am getting my mileven on, but not excluding other pairings and family and friend type fluff as well.

Loving Spoonfuls

Set 1

Surprise

The first time they played hide and seek it ended with an ice pack on Mike's shoulder and a nosebleed for El. He explained the rules and she was excited to be the seeker. He told her he would hide somewhere in the cabin, which was small, and she would have to find him. No void visits allowed!

Hiding behind the couch, Mike thought he would be discovered easily. When she finally came near, he jumped up to surprise her. El, shocked by the sudden movement, thrust her hands out pushed Mike over the coffee table and into the TV.

Present

The first present Mike gave El was a Green Lantern ring that he fashioned out of lantern included with an action figure. It looked nothing like Hal Jordan's ring. So be it. He wanted to give her a ring and there it was. He could tell she was unsure when he gave it to her, wondering what it was and what it meant. After he smiled and nodded, she put it on her finger. It was ugly, bulky, and green. It looked terrible. But he didn't care. Neither did El as she twisted her hand back and forth admiring it.

Together

The trail from the cabin into the woods was now well worn as Mike had come to call more often in months after El closed the gate. They would walk among the trees and enjoy nature and each other. She

would hug his arm and peer up at him from underneath her wool hat. She would smile and his heart would melt at the same time he would renewed his vow to protect her with his life.

"What are you thinking?" she would ask.

"That I love you beyond what any words could say," he would respond, kissing her softly.

Occasion

It was the day before Dustin's birthday and El was determined to make him cookies. She called Mike and he came out to cabin to help. Watching her crack eggs with such precision and mix the ingredients with acute determination surprised Mike and a swell of pride stung his eyes with unshed tears.

El looked up and stopped stirring at the site of Mike's glistening eyes.

"What's wrong, Mike?"

"It's stupid."

"It's not stupid. What is it?"

"You amaze me. Even making cookies, you amaze me."

El grinned bashfully and took a pinch of flour and flicked it at him.

Because

"I want to writer her a poem," Mike said to Dustin, Lucas, and Will at their Party meeting. "Something cool. Like Shakespeare."

"Like Shakespeare?" Lucas said, wincing in warning.

"Forget The Bard," Dustin added. "Go Tolkien. All the way. Shall I compare thee to an Elven Queen?"

"That is Shakespeare," Mike said. "Kind of. But she's not an elf?"

"You could do worse than comparing her to Galadriel?" Will said.

"She won't get it, though?" Mike protested. "I have to keep it simple."

"Okay, then," Dustin started. "How about a summer day?"

Dustin was suddenly bombarded with crumpled paper balls.

26. Loving Spoonfuls 2

Loving Spoonfuls

Set 2

Warm

The warmth of the fire brought that stinging, tingly feeling to El's fingers. The mittens she had been wearing outside were not enough to protect her from the cold of the snow and ice. At the time, she had not minded much given the she and Mike had been engaged in an epic snowball fight.

"It's more fun with more people," Mike said, warming his hands as well.

El shrugged. "Maybe. This was fun with just us. Like Dad and me."

She leaned on his shoulder and he hugged her from the side as the stared, peacefully, into the flames.

Fuzzy

It was not the first time El drank a carbonated soda. Poppa had made her crush the cans back in the lab. However, it was the first time she had Ginger Ale. As she popped the top of the can and brought it her lips, the fizzy jumped into her nose. Setting the can down, she let loose a monstrous sneeze. When she was done, she looked at Mike, who was trying not to laugh.

"Very funny," she said, shooting him a disapproving look.

"Now, you should have a drink," Mike said. "It's really good."

"You take a drink first."

Sweet

Once upon a time, there lived a girl in a log cabin that did not know much of the world. She had seen some of its darkest aspects as a

child, but her new home with a local constable had shown her what love truly is. But, it was the handsome young prince, the one whom had rescued her from the dungeon, who had her attention. When he placed his cloak over a puddle, she thought it was sweet rewarding him with a stunning smile.

He bowed.

She blushed.

He offered his hand to lead hear through the rough patch.

Cute

In the aftermath of a Party meeting, El watched as Max and Lucas huddled together at the end of the couch and touched each other's noses, tickled each other, and spoke words and sounds she didn't recognize. In the midst of it, they pecked one another with kisses and hugged a lot.

"What are they doing?" El asked, turning to Mike who sat next to her at the table.

Mike rolled his eyes. "Being Lovey-dovey, I guess."

"Lovey-dovey?" El questioned.

"Yeah, cutesy-pie?" Mike said. "Like silly in love."

El arched an eyebrow and wrinkled her nose. "They are *not* cute."

Snuggle

The day after El closed the gate, she slept; stirring only to use the bathroom and back to bed. It was 9:30 PM when she emerged from Hopper's room. He had placed her there and went to sleep on the couch. He was watching TV when she came out. She was wrapped in a blanket with mascara smudges around her eyes and her bed head giving her natural curls an advantage over the product she used to slick it back. She said nothing, but planted herself next to him, snuggling up close. Soon, he heard her heavy breathing. Asleep again.

27. Chapter 27

Loving Spoonfuls

Set 3

Breathe

The first time Mike saw El in a bathing suit, he had to remind himself to breathe. She would not wear a bikini, which he understood entirely, but it didn't matter. She was absolutely beautiful. The one piece hugged her hips and her breasts and invited him to look where he should not be caught looking.

Her skin had finally met the sun and a light tan accentuated her brown curls and caramel brown eyes. He had seen her, in a robe, after a shower. Hair wet. Now, he envisioned El as Phoebe Cates in 'Fast Times at Ridgemont High'.

Sigh

El lay on her side reading an X-Men comic that had Cyclops firing his plasma beam Storm. El wondered what that was about given that they were supposed to be friends. Mike sat next to her, on the bed, reading Avengers. Five pages later, El felt a finger on her hip and felt it trace a feathery line down her thigh. She didn't flinch, or move at all, soaking up the tingling sensation that spread through her body. The finger traced the interior of her pelvic bone before looping back out to her hip. An involuntary sigh escaped her lips.

Gasp

Mike held the ice cube in his hand. Water dripped between his fingers as he silently approached El at the dinner table. She had come over to hang out and play games. However, at the moment, she was sitting with her back to him eating a grilled cheese sandwich. Two more steps and he was he was home free. Still a step outside of her periphery, Mike raised the ice cube and lifted the collar of her shirt enough to drop it inside. Her gasp was music to his ears as her shoulders hunched and she shot from the chair.

Pant

His hands were in her hair as her hands moved gingerly on his neck, collar, and cheeks. Their lips were mashed together and the movement of their tongues was a passionate frenzy. Every few moments, they separated, panting in their frenetic awkwardness. Only to start again, punishing their lips in a mixture of pain and pleasure. Mike's hands dropped below El's collar and landed on her breasts. He felt her inhale at his touch and moan into his mouth.

"Mike, no…" she breathed, removing his hands. "I am not ready and this is not the place."

Mike growled in concession.

Exhale

When he was twelve, Mike wasn't thinking about girls. When he met El, he still wasn't thinking about her in that way. It had taken two years; one with her absent from his life and the other with limited contact for such visions to cloud his mind. By the time he was fourteen, he was a raging hormonal teenager with full access to the object of his affections. Absence had made the heart grow fonder and larger. Mike was now more like Lurch, but El was 'filling out' nicely. He blew out a long breath as she entered the room.